

Provisional Identification¹ and Placement Procedures² During Periods of Extended School Closures Due to COVID-19 Grades K-12

This procedure provides a means of provisionally identifying English learners (ELs) during the time that schools are closed for normal operations due to COVID-19 and face-to-face screening is not possible.³ This process may not replace the formal identification process when face-to-face screening is possible, and formal screening must take place as soon as possible once school resumes normal operations for any student who has been given a provisional status⁴

Step 1: Administer the home language survey (HLS) to all newly enrolling students.

Step 2: Conduct an interview remotely with the student (phone, Skype, Zoom, etc.) when the answer to any of the questions on the HLS is a language other than English. Follow the procedures below and complete the speaking, listening and interaction rubrics⁵ in Appendix.

Step 3: Determine whether the student might be an EL using student interview results and make a provisional placement decision.

Step 4: Notify parents and/or legal guardians of screening test results and provisional placement decision.

Step 5: DO NOT code the student as an EL in before you administer a language proficiency screening test.

¹ Districts that are subject to settlement agreements or consent decrees relating to English learners must seek guidance from the district's legal counsel as to whether the provisional procedures would be consistent with the terms of the applicable agreement/decreed.

² Enrollment of students should not be delayed due to any delays in screening for EL services, to the extent consistent with health and welfare directives from the relevant governmental entities.

³ On March 10, 2020, Governor Baker declared a state of emergency in recognition that "the worldwide outbreak of COVID-19 and the effects of its extreme risk of person-to-person transmission throughout the United States and the Commonwealth significantly affect the life and health of our people, as well as the economy, and is a disaster that impacts the health, security and safety of the public." March 10, 2020 State of Emergency Declaration at ¶ 10. Governor Baker issued two subsequent orders relating to public and private elementary and secondary schools in the Commonwealth. On March 15, 2020, Governor Baker ordered public and private elementary and secondary schools to suspend in-person instruction until April 6, 2020, and on March 25, 2020, Governor Baker extended the closure and ordered schools not to reopen for normal operations before May 4, 2020. If a subsequent Executive Order extends school closure to the end of the planned school year this procedure would be available.

⁴ The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education is seeking additional guidance from the United States Department of Education (USED). This document may be updated to include guidance from USED.

⁵ Molle, Linquanti, MacDonald, and Cook in [Discerning — and Fostering — What English Learners Can Do with Language](#), 2016

Step 1: Administer the [home language survey \(HLS\)](#) to all newly enrolling students.

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The primary purpose of a home language survey (HLS) is to find out whether there is a language other than English spoken at home, in which case the student should be assessed for English language proficiency. The HLS also presents an opportunity to collect other useful information about the student that will help district personnel understand the student's personal and educational history in order to plan an appropriate educational program. **During extended school closures due to COVID-19, HLSs will be completed remotely by district-trained enrollment personnel via phone, Skype, Zoom, etc. if it is accessible to both districts and families. Parents can also complete the HLS and mail it to the district.**

Step 2: Conduct an interview remotely with the student (phone, Skype, Zoom, etc.) when the answer to any of the questions on the HLS is a language other than English. Follow the procedures below and complete the speaking, listening and interaction rubrics in Appendix.

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Districts must conduct an interview remotely with all students whose HLSs indicate that there is a language other than English spoken at home with the following limited exceptions:

- students who were previously classified as ELs and were then reclassified as FELs in their former districts;
- students who transferred from another district within Massachusetts or another [WIDA state](#) and who did not qualify as ELs on the English proficiency screening test administered in their former districts or state; and
- students who transferred from another district within Massachusetts or another [WIDA state](#) with ACCESS results from the **last calendar year**.

The interview should consist of questions at varying levels of difficulty that are meant to elicit interaction between the interviewer and the student that will make it possible to determine the student's ability in listening, speaking, and interaction. Interviewers must have strategies in place to ensure students who do not have experience interacting with someone through a screen are comfortable during the interview that is being conducted remotely.

Below are *examples* of questions at various levels of difficulty, but interviewers must tailor the interaction as necessary based on the apparent proficiency of the student and their age.

- Start with questions at low levels of difficulty and progress in difficulty from there.
 - Examples of Low-level questions: "What is your name?" "How old are you?" and "What do you like to do?"
 - Examples of Moderate-level questions: "What do you like at school?," "What kind of food do you like?," "Tell me about your favorite (sports team, video game, toy, or hobby)?," "What would you like to do when you graduate from high school/grow up?"
 - Examples High-level questions: "What is your favorite subject in school and why?" "Pretend you are trying to convince me why I should like your favorite (sports team, video game, toy, or hobby)." "Describe your favorite teacher/friend/family member for me." "Describe a job that you think is useful for society and why."
- Stop at the level where a student has difficulty responding.
- If the student has difficulty responding at a particular level, then ask a question or two from the previous level to end on a positive note.
- Complete the speaking, listening and interaction domains rubrics in the [Appendix](#).

NOTE: If a student is unable to complete the interview process (e.g., because of a disability or refusal), then the determination of EL status must be made based on the remaining available evidence gathered from the HLS, parent interview, and academic records review. If reasonable evidence of English proficiency cannot be established based on those sources along with the incomplete screener results, if any, then the student should be provisionally identified as an EL until screening can be completed.

Generally, a student who easily communicates at a "High Level" is NOT likely to qualify for EL status.

ATTENTION:

- 1- Regardless of whether a student is provisionally identified as an EL or not, the formal identification process, including face-to-face screening, must be completed once school resumes This includes students who were not provisionally identified.
- 2- The district must ensure that students who are given a provisional status assignment (identified as EL or non-EL) are tracked by some means (e.g. a special code in the local student management system) so that once school resumes, they

are screened according to the full procedure.

3- **Students are not coded as ELs in SIMS** before they are screened according to the full procedure.

Step 3: Determine whether the student might be an EL using student interview results and make a provisional placement decision.

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Districts must make a **provisional** determination about the most appropriate academic placement and supports based on the student’s English language proficiency information and the district’s chosen method of instructional delivery to address students’ limited English proficiency and to give them the opportunity to participate meaningfully and equally in the district’s educational program (G.L. c. 71A, § 4; 603 CMR 14.04). Consistent with federal and state civil rights laws, school districts must continue to provide services to English learners, consistent with the need to protect the health and safety of students and staff.

Step 4: Notify parents and/or legal guardians of screening test results and provisional placement decision.

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Districts must provide the parent with a description of the **provisional** placement and ELE services that will be made available for their children.

Once schools have reopened for normal operations, districts will send the information that needs to be communicated to all EL parents after a student is identified as an EL based on the results of a face-to-face administration of an English Language Proficiency Screener. Detailed information regarding the nature of this communication is provided in the [Guidance on the Initial Identification of English Learners](#).

Step 5: DO NOT code the student as an EL in before you administer a language proficiency screening test.

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As noted earlier, students should NOT be coded as ELs in SIMS before they are screened according to the full procedure described in the [Guidance on the Initial Identification of English Learners](#).

Appendix

Grade: Kindergarten

Rubric 1 - Interaction, Listening, and Speaking Language Use Inventory

Student:

Evaluator's Name:

Interview Date(s):

Domain:

	LOW (0)	MODERATE (.3)	HIGH (.5)	Value
Interaction	Can engage in very short social exchanges, and sustain the conversation with substantial support. Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar topics and activities, possibly using provided language frames or structures. <input type="checkbox"/>	Can function in most social situations in the classroom. Can enter unprepared in conversation on topics that are familiar, of personal interest, or connected to everyday life. Can use provided language frames or structures as models for original expression. <input type="checkbox"/>	Can use language spontaneously, flexibly, and effectively for social and academic purposes. Can formulate ideas and opinions with precision and relate contributions skillfully to those of other speakers. <input type="checkbox"/>	
Listening	Can understand the main point in simple messages in slow and clear standard speech. Can understand phrases and high frequency vocabulary related to familiar topics. <input type="checkbox"/>	Can understand the main points in slow and clear standard speech on familiar topics in discussions, presentations, and educational videos. <input type="checkbox"/>	Can understand extended speech even when it is not clearly structured and when relationships are only implied and not signaled explicitly. <input type="checkbox"/>	
Speaking	Can use a series of connected phrases and short, simple sentences to talk in simple terms about familiar topics. <input type="checkbox"/>	Can use a series of connected phrases and short, simple sentences to talk in simple terms about familiar and academic topics. <input type="checkbox"/>	Can present clear, expanded discourse about a familiar or academic topic using some content-specific vocabulary. <input type="checkbox"/>	
TOTAL				

Grade: 1

Rubric 1 - Interaction, Listening, and Speaking Language Use Inventory

Student:

Evaluator's Name:

Interview Date(s):

Domain:

	LOW (0)	MODERATE (.3)	HIGH (.5)	Value
Interaction	Can engage in very short social exchanges, and sustain the conversation with substantial support. Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar topics and activities, possibly using provided language frames or structures. <input type="checkbox"/>	Can function in most social situations in the classroom. Can enter unprepared in conversation on topics that are familiar, of personal interest, or connected to everyday life. Can use provided language frames or structures as models for original expression. <input type="checkbox"/>	Can use language spontaneously, flexibly, and effectively for social and academic purposes. Can formulate ideas and opinions with precision and relate contributions skillfully to those of other speakers. <input type="checkbox"/>	
Listening	Can understand the main point in simple messages in slow and clear standard speech. Can understand phrases and high frequency vocabulary related to familiar topics. <input type="checkbox"/>	Can understand the main points in slow and clear standard speech on familiar topics in discussions, presentations, and educational videos. <input type="checkbox"/>	Can understand extended speech even when it is not clearly structured and when relationships are only implied and not signaled explicitly. <input type="checkbox"/>	
Speaking	Can use a series of connected phrases and short, simple sentences to talk in simple terms about familiar topics. <input type="checkbox"/>	Can use a series of connected phrases and short, simple sentences to talk in simple terms about familiar and academic topics. <input type="checkbox"/>	Can present clear, expanded discourse about a familiar or academic topic using some content-specific vocabulary.	
TOTAL				

Grades 2-3

Rubric 1 - Interaction, Listening, and Speaking Language Use Inventory

Student:

Evaluator's Name:

Observation Date(s):

Domain:

	LOW (0)	MODERATE (.3)	HIGH (.5)	Value
Interaction	Can engage in very short social exchanges, and sustain the conversation with substantial support. Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar topics and activities, possibly using provided language frames or structures. <input type="checkbox"/>	Can function in most social situations in the classroom. Can enter unprepared in conversation on topics that are familiar, of personal interest, or connected to everyday life. Can use provided language frames or structures as models for original expression. <input type="checkbox"/>	Can use language spontaneously, flexibly, and effectively for social and academic purposes. Can formulate ideas and opinions with precision and relate contributions skillfully to those of other speakers. <input type="checkbox"/>	
Listening	Can understand the main point in simple messages in slow and clear standard speech. Can understand phrases and high frequency vocabulary related to familiar topics. <input type="checkbox"/>	Can understand the main points in slow and clear standard speech on familiar topics in discussions, presentations, and educational videos. <input type="checkbox"/>	Can understand extended speech even when it is not clearly structured and when relationships are only implied and not signaled explicitly. <input type="checkbox"/>	
Speaking	Can use a series of connected phrases and short, simple sentences to talk in simple terms about familiar topics with little to no content-specific vocabulary. <input type="checkbox"/>	Can use a series of connected phrases and short, simple sentences to talk in simple terms and some content-specific vocabulary about familiar and academic topics. <input type="checkbox"/>	Can present clear, expanded discourse about a familiar or academic topic using content-specific vocabulary. <input type="checkbox"/>	
TOTAL				

Grades: 4-12

Rubric 1 - Interaction, Listening, and Speaking Language Use Inventory

Student:

Evaluator's Name:

Interview Date(s):

Domain:

	LOW (0)	MODERATE (.3)	HIGH (.5)	Value
Interaction	Can engage in very short social exchanges, and sustain the conversation with substantial support. Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar topics and activities, possibly using provided language frames or structures. <input type="checkbox"/>	Can function in most social situations in the classroom. Can enter unprepared in conversation on topics that are familiar, of personal interest, or connected to everyday life. Can use provided language frames or structures as models for original expression. <input type="checkbox"/>	Can use language spontaneously, flexibly, and effectively for social and academic purposes. Can formulate ideas and opinions with precision and relate contributions skillfully to those of other speakers. <input type="checkbox"/>	
Listening	Can understand the main point in simple messages in slow and clear standard speech. Can understand phrases and high frequency vocabulary related to familiar topics. <input type="checkbox"/>	Can understand the main points in slow and clear standard speech on familiar topics in discussions, presentations, and educational videos. <input type="checkbox"/>	Can understand extended speech even when it is not clearly structured and when relationships are only implied and not signaled explicitly. <input type="checkbox"/>	
Speaking	Can use a series of connected phrases and short, simple sentences to talk in simple terms about familiar topics. <input type="checkbox"/>	Can connect phrases to talk about familiar topics using simple sentences. Can briefly give reasons and explanations for reactions, opinions, and plans. <input type="checkbox"/>	Can present clear, detailed descriptions of complex subjects integrating subthemes, developing particular points, and finishing with an appropriate conclusion. <input type="checkbox"/>	
TOTAL				